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ABSTRACT

This book uses agricultural production statistics, school records, and records on births and families to provide a new interpretation of how agriculture's development in a market economy impacted the formation of elementary education during the 19th century. It provides background on the competing purposes underlying compulsory state-supported education, including nationalism, religion, capitalism, work discipline, and labor. Chapter 1 documents primary school attendance in the northern United States during the middle 19th century and the factors contributing to its growth. Chapter 2 reviews the rural perspective on the common school and how the common school was shaped by businessmen, artisans, farmers, and religious and democratic traditions. Chapter 3 focuses on the role that farmers played in "classless" rural education by defining four classes of farmers, with special emphasis on the commercial farmer. Chapter 4 reviews the growth of a market economy and its influence on education, with emphasis on the work and teaching methods of John Lancaster. Chapter 5 explores the "riddle of republicanism" and curricular emphases on God and religion, civic virtues, and love of country. Chapter 6 provides individual and community analyses of the decline in rural fertility. Chapter 7 discusses the curriculum of the home and the widespread belief in the importance of the mother's educational role. Chapter 8 sums up the reasons for the growth of the common school in America. (Contains notes, illustrations, an appendix explaining quantitative data used, and a bibliography.) (SAS)

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